**LAPD’s “Top Brass” Address Residents at Sunland-Tujunga Police Town Hall**

On Thursday, March 24, 2016, several of L.A.P.D.’s finest came to Sunland-Tujunga to address growing concerns about transient and drug crimes as well as drag racing and other issues. The event was sponsored by Sunland-Tujunga Neighborhood Council Safety Chairperson Nina Royal and was held at the Elks Club on Commerce Avenue. Guest speakers included: Commander Chamberlain, Homeless Coordinator for the City of L.A.: LAPD Lieutenant Solano, who oversees gangs and narcotics; LAPD Transportation Officer Flores and Captain Eskridge.

Commander Chamberlain opened the meeting by telling residents that a new law came into effect 2 or 3 years ago which prevents police from going through transient encampments and confiscating their belongings. However, there is now a proposed law before the Los Angeles City Council #56.11 which would allow police and sanitation to go through the possessions of homeless when they are left out in the open. Currently, a team known as the “Reset Team” goes to transient cleanup sites along with Department of Sanitation to identify bioenvironmental hazards that may exist in cleanup sites.

Commander Chamberlain mentioned that many homeless do not want short-term housing, that they are "service-resistant." Due to a homeless advocate lawyer, who has created legal roadblocks for police, the homeless are well protected here in California. He pointed out that being homeless is not considered a crime. He added that it is in fact not humane to enable human beings to live in tents and he suggested that handouts of clothing to the homeless is actually creating a larger issue with trash accumulations.

Captain Eskridge spoke about the LAPD Transient Car that focuses specifically on transients committing crimes. In order to support police investigations, he suggested that businesses and residents install video cameras, so if a crime is committed, there is proof to prosecute them. He added that today's technology is very inexpensive and can provide very good quality surveillance for properties.

Lieutenant Solano spoke about how his work involves reducing the number of violent crimes that go hand in hand with gangs and narcotics so he can rebuild the community’s trust. He gave a report on what is going on with the local gangs in the Sunland-Tujunga area and how crimes have been reduced. Out of 18 previous marijuana dispensaries in the Sunland-Tujunga Foothill area, only a few locations now operate.

LAPD Traffic Officer Flores of the Community Traffic Safety Unit then reviewed stats on the number of traffic incidents in the Valley last year: Out of 17,000 total, 1,600 were in Sunland-Tujunga and 5 involved fatalities. That number is now up to 13 fatalities for 2016.

Residents questioned how to deal with illegal street racing, a big issue for our community. Police are spread thin right now, but residents were told to report it to LAPD and they will respond as soon as possible. As with any police activity, it’s always best to report the incident to the police and let them investigate instead of trying to resolve it yourself.

Important phone numbers to call to report crimes: “**911” – for emergencies only.**

**For non-emergencies:**

**GANGS, DRUGS:** Lt. Carlos Solano: [818-897-6081](tel:818-897-6081), [26339@lapd.lacity.org](mailto:26339@lapd.lacity.org)

**NARCOTICS:** Det. Travis Coyle, [818-834-3136](tel:818-834-3136), [33128@lapd.lacity.org](mailto:33128@lapd.lacity.org)

**TRAFFIC:** Officer Joel Flores, [(818) 644-8142](tel:%28818%29%20644-8142)

**General LAPD #** - 818 834-3115 / Anonymous Tip Line – 800 222-8477